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Legislative Report



League of Women Voters
of Oregon

More for K-12 Schools from Department of State Lands

The Department of State Lands is the manager of state lands whose earnings feed the [Common School Fund](#). Recently the state's Land Board (Governor, Secretary of State and State Treasurer) changed their formula for distributing the earnings from the Common School Fund to 4% of the fund. That percentage is the average of the last three sessions' distribution. However, because of the state's fiscal situation, the Ways and Means Co-Chairs have recommended increasing the distribution to 5% of the fund this session, which would mean \$19.14 million additional for K-12 education. The Land Board is slated to accept that recommendation at its meeting this June. The Constitution requires the fund to be distributed "as prescribed by law"; however, since the Legislature has not prescribed any set distribution, the Land Board has established a policy. ([Budget Bill: SB 5542](#))



Peggy Lynch, Natural Resource Coordinator

Oregon Commission on Children and Families Survives



The Oregon Commission on Children and Families (OCCF) budget bill, [HB 5004](#), passed out of the Human Services Ways and Means subcommittee last week with a 15% cut in basic funds for staff, operation of county offices, and program funds. The Court Appointed Special Advocates and Relief Nurseries only had cost of living cuts. The Juvenile Crime Prevention funds were cut 20%. The Healthy Start final cut was about 22% at the county level with larger cuts at the state level. The Runaway and Homeless Youth grant funds were eliminated as expected, but the OCCF requested to backfill these funds with Youth Investment, a federal grant stream. Child Care Development funds were transferred to DHS to pay for the Employment Related Day Care. The OCCF gave up 2.5 staff members in the state office with 25 remaining. The net result for counties will be a lower level of funding for local prevention programs.

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

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State Parks Means Jobs



Photo by John Hans, <http://www.flickr.com/>

Last session, the League worked hard to assure that increased lottery dollars helped purchase additional park lands to meet the future needs of Oregonians. This session the Ways and Means subcommittee on Natural Resources has limited land acquisition and instead poured monies into facilities investments, repairs and maintenance at our current state parks. **This action should increase job opportunities around Oregon.** Overall, lottery dollars are down, so adjustments were also made to the local government parks grants program.

Expect to see some fee increases in May of 2010 at state parks to help pay for parks services. **One piece of good news is that we are seeing an increase in federal dollars for a number of our natural resource agencies.** Finally, after committee discussion, Key Performance Measure #6, related to Property Acquisition, has been kept until a better measure can be developed that addresses the need for parks for future generations. ([Budget Bill: HB 5033](#))

Peggy Lynch, Natural Resources Coordinator

5-Minute Activist: Urgent! Public Safety Bills Action Alert



Your support is urgently needed for public safety bills HB 2290B and HB 2335B. These bills will save money in the Public Safety system by making reasonable adjustments to the Measure 57 and are supported by the Promise of 57 Coalition, of which the League is a member. The bills are currently sitting in the Public Safety Ways and Means subcommittee until there are enough votes of support on the House floor. For background and message information see the [League's Action Alert #5](#) and contact your [representative](#).

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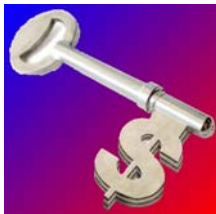
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Revenue Tax Proposals Not Enough



The House Revenue Committee is considering increases in both personal and corporate income taxes with a goal of raising \$800 million. **However, the tax proposals being honed for action fall short by an estimated \$30 million;** final decisions are still in flux. Remember that even with the increase, we are at least \$2 billion short of being able to provide state services at the current level. Both bills, [HB 3405](#) and [HB 2649](#), have been approved by the House Revenue Committee and will be going to the floor this week. (Read the Statesman-Journal article on these bills, "[Tax votes will churn state's political waters](#)".)

Passing the tax proposals in both houses with the required 3/5 vote is not certain and may rest upon an agreement to refer the proposals to voters. If the Legislature doesn't include a referral, the anti-tax folks will try to refer at least the proposed personal income tax, even though **the tax hike would not affect 97 percent of Oregonians.** While there is generally a favorable climate for the corporate tax measures, small business owners are still concerned as to how long the recession will continue.

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

Human Services Budgets Are Finalized this Week



The Human Services Ways and Means subcommittee has been making final recommendations on divisions of the Department of Human Services' (DHS) budget as detailed in [SB 5529](#). DHS started off with an increased budget request due to increased unemployment and increased demand on food stamps, temporary assistance and health care due to the current economy. Federal stimulus funds helped balance this budget. Some of the reductions taken at the end of 2007-09 will continue.

Children, Adults and Families Division contains:

- Self Sufficiency Programs as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the renamed federal food stamp program will provide an increased benefit level. It served over 500,000 people in 2008,
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provided cash assistance to over 23,000 families at end of 2008 and to Relative Caretakers of children,
- Employment Related Day Care will be restricted to parents exiting TANF for employment. The Jobs and Jobs Plus training has an increased demand.
- Vocational Rehabilitation continues to prepare disabled adults for employment but only accepts a limited number of trainees.
- Child Safety serves 14,000 abused or neglected children in one year, including 9,000 in foster care or residential care and adoption assistance. The budget includes a rate redesign since payment rates for foster and residential care are in the bottom 25% nationally.

[Read about separate bills related to foster care or self sufficiency programs.](#)

Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator

Who Gets Our Five Cents?



[HB 3465](#) requires distributors to keep complete and accurate records that reflect the number of beverage containers sold by the distributor and the number of beverage containers returned to the distributors for which the refund value was paid. Although the bill originally required that the money currently being kept by the distributors (assumed to be between \$20 and \$30 million) would be returned to the state, the bill was amended to include only the reporting requirement. A work session was held on June 3 in the House Revenue Committee. It passed out of the committee to the House floor with a "do pass" recommendation.

[HB 2184](#), the updated Bottle Bill, has stalled in the House Revenue Committee. It is unclear if it will move this session.

Sara Wilson, Natural Resources Specialist

Health Care Bills Pass House

[HB 2009C](#) and [HB 2116C](#) both passed the House Monday. The League actively supported both of these bills by testifying and in an Action Alert urging members to contact their legislators. These bills now move on to the Senate.

Initiative Reform on Its Way



The bill requiring the Attorney General to assign identical ballot titles when two or more initiatives are substantially similar, [HB 2941A](#), has passed the House and now has moved out of the Senate Rules Committee to the floor. The League has testified in support in both houses ([testimony to House Rules Committee](#) and [Senate Rules Committee](#)), signed on to the floor letter in the House, and will sign the floor letter presented by the Initiative Reform Coalition for the Senate.

Success for a Citizen Initiative Review Panel

[HB 2895A](#), the bill that proposes citizen review panels for proposed state initiatives, passed out of Senate Rules on a 4-1 vote June 4, and will now go to the Senate floor. It has already passed the House, and with the expected favorable Senate vote, it will be heading to the governor's desk. It is great to see a League-sponsored project reach its goal. We testified at both House ([read our testimony](#)) and Senate hearings and will prepare a floor letter if needed. One pilot project initiative panel will be allowed for 2010 with private funding. The planning, implementation and evaluation processes are included in the bill.

Election Issues Still Pending



[SB 783](#), which adds additional campaign finance disclosure, was debated in the Senate twice last week. Senate Rules finally moved it with two sets of amendments on June 4.

[SB 776](#), which raises the fees for both candidates and initiative arguments in the Voters' Pamphlet to a level which would pay for about 50% of the costs of producing the pamphlet, has been moved from Senate Rules to Ways and Means, although it is a revenue-producing measure. We are concerned that Ways and Means might take some other funding away from the Secretary of State, which is needed for complaint and general election procedures. [Link here for more on these two bills plus more on election issues.](#)

Kappy Eaton, Governance Coordinator

A New Perspective on the Legislature



As a new legislative intern, the whole process of going to hearings and keeping track of bills seemed overwhelming. As time went on I have realized a few things that have made the whole situation easier. The first is to focus attention on one area, like health care or natural resources; this narrows your focus and makes the case load more reasonable. Monitoring hearings either in person or online is great, because it is not often that you get to hear both sides to an argument, and you can learn a lot more about the area you have chosen to focus on from the people whose lives will change when the bill is decided. It also helps to have friends or a nonpartisan organization (like the League) to share information on the other topics.

The second is to know someone who can help you through the process and ask them questions. It helps to learn the history of the various committees, bills and of the Legislature in general. In my experience the people who take the time to go to hearings are interested in the topic and are glad to share what they know.

The last and best tip is to stick with it. When I started I did not really know anything about the current Legislature and the bills being discussed. After I kept going I started to make connections between bills, and by spending some time on the [Legislature's website](#) and the [League's Action Matrix](#) I learned some easy ways to follow them through different committees. It takes more than one legislative session to feel comfortable with the whole process. I am glad I started and I have learned so much. I know how the government can affect my life, and in my future endeavors I will always have the skills I have learned this session to stay informed.

Tracy Johnson, Legislative Intern

Speaking the Language of the Legislature



Sine Die: "Without fixing a day for a future meeting": the last day of a legislative session.

(Rumors are flying as to when sine die will occur, ranging from June 15 to June 30 (the official deadline. Stay tuned.)

For more definitions, read the Legislature's [glossary of terms](#).



Mark the Date

Legislature Action Days

Through the end of session: Although policy committees (except for Rules, Revenue and Ways and Means committees) are not working bills, some are holding "informational meetings." Listen to discussions on issues through the [Legislature's audio website](#) that may be a part of next session's agenda.

June 30 or before (Tuesday) Sine Die (Rumors are that it could be anytime between June 15 and June 30.)

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